UNCLE RUPERT'S STORIES FOR BOYS

H. J. Williams.
April 15th 1878
From Jane Dawson.

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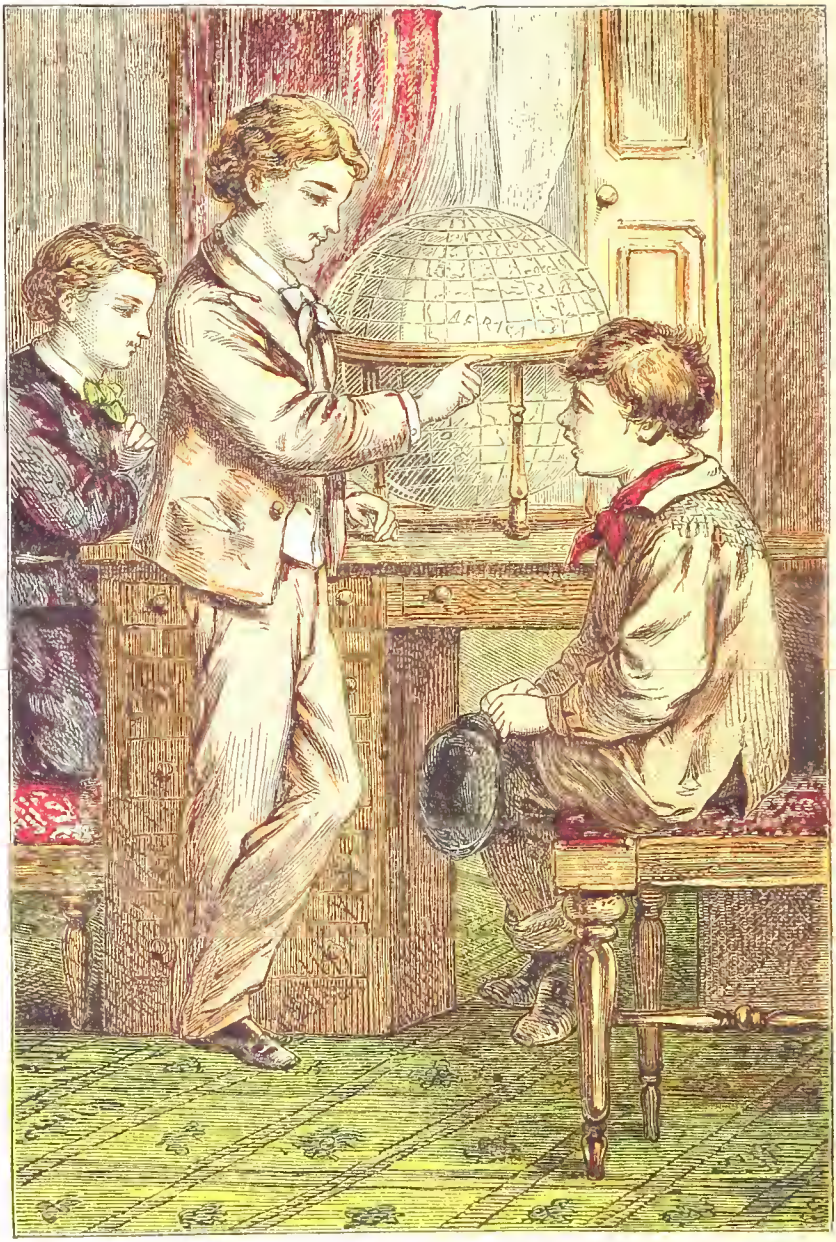

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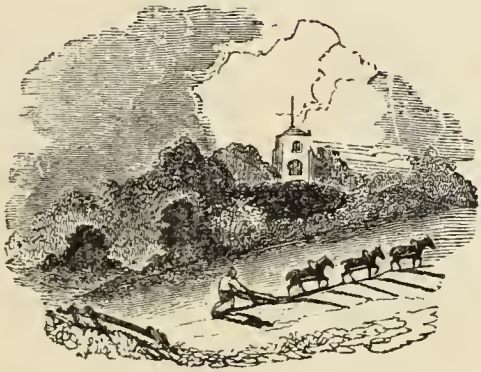
Stories for Boys.



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UNCLE RUPERT'S

STORIES FOR BOYS.

Ralph, the Farmer's Boy.

CLEMENT BAINES was a clever boy of his years, but he had one sad failing; he was vain and proud of what he knew, and loved to show off his knowledge before those who knew less than himself. His father had tried many ways to cure him of this failing, but without much success. He stood high in the opinion of his companions; and his brother Basil, who was younger, regarded him as a sort of wonder of the world. Oh, how silly is self-conceit! how foolish is vanity!

It happened that Farmer Redman, an upright, respectable man, who held a farm under

Mr. Baines, had occasion to send the latter a message, and his son Ralph was the bearer of it. Mr. Baines being busy when Ralph arrived, Clement and Basil filled up the time in talking to Ralph, whom they called the Farmer's Boy. This was a pleasant thing to Clement, who was just in the humour to let the farmer's boy see a little of his cleverness.

As Mr. Baines much respected Farmer Redman, so he wished to act with attention and kindness to his son. Ralph, therefore, was soon seated in the parlour with Clement and Basil, though he would much rather have waited in the kitchen.

And now Clement was in all his glory; for, as Mr. Baines was not likely to join them for some time, he had a fine opportunity for display. He had talked to Ralph Redman about arithmetic, and grammar, and chemistry, and music, and painting; every now and then asking him questions that he knew he could not answer. Then he placed on the table his pair of globes, and sadly puzzled poor Ralph with what he said about latitude, longitude, and the equator; but still more so when he displayed his knowledge of the stars. Basil

looked as if he quite enjoyed his brother's cleverness; while poor Ralph, finding himself sadly at a loss, blushed with a colour like a rose.

It was just at the moment when Clement was making Ralph stare with amazement, by telling how many years it would take a ball, fired from the mouth of a cannon, to reach one of the stars, that Mr. Baines came in. He saw at a glance, by Clement's exultant eyes, by Ralph's red face, and by one of the globes on the table, how matters stood, and in a very short time he brought about a perfect change.

After asking Ralph about the health of his parents, and hearing the message he had brought him, he began to talk about the farm. He observed that the most useful earthly knowledge was that which satisfied our wants. "It is much better," said he, glancing at the globe, "that we should know the world we live in, than possess a knowledge of the stars; and much more useful to be able to cultivate the land of our own neighbourhood, than to describe the situation of countries on the other side the seas."

These remarks of Mr. Baines made Ralph

Redman feel more at ease than he did before; but they sadly abated the pride of heart of his son Clement.

Mr. Baines then asked Ralph about the management of different sorts of land: when the latter told him that wet land was worth but little until it was properly drained; that cold, clayey lands were manured with lime and other hot manures; while light, dry lands were often made better by mixing them with marl and clay. In short, he seemed to know almost as much about the manuring of land as an old farmer. Mr. Baines then asked his son Clement what he knew about drainage and manures; but he knew nothing.

When Mr. Baines talked of tillage in general, Ralph showed so much knowledge about single, and double, and wheel ploughs, sowing, drilling, harrowing, and rolling, that Mr. Baines was quite pleased with him. Clement was asked by his father what he knew about these things; but again he replied that he knew nothing.

When the conversation turned upon the produce of the land, Clement never so much as opened his lips; while Ralph gave such an account of the different kinds of wheat,

barley, oats, rye, peas, beans, turnips, cabbages, mangel-wurzel, grass, and hay, that little Basil looked up with wonder, and began to think, by the silence of his brother Clement, that he was not quite so clever as he had taken him to be. Again Mr. Baines asked Clement if he knew anything about what Ralph Redman was so well describing; when, with a heavy heart, he replied, "No."

Clement Baines was really in a pitiable case, for he found that he had greatly undervalued "the Farmer's Boy," as he called him; and he felt, too, that he was fast losing ground in the high opinion of his brother Basil. He had, however, brought trouble on his own head, and his proud heart had to be humbled.

Mr. Baines, who had much delight in farming pursuits, seeing how well acquainted Ralph was with the management of a farm, kept up the conversation, being very anxious to raise Ralph in the opinion of his sons, and also to teach Clement a lesson which he would not be likely to forget.

After talking of hops, hemp, and flax, hay-making, sheep-shearing, reaping, rick-making, threshing, and apple-picking, he

asked Ralph about the live-stock of a farm; and this led the farmer's son to speak of fat cattle, milch cows, horses, calves, sheep, lambs, and pigs, as well as of turkeys, geese, ducks, fowls; and this he did in so plain and simple a way, that it was quite clear that he understood his subject. Once more Clement was appealed to for what he knew; but a red face, a downcast look, and the confession that he knew nothing, was his only reply.

Ralph Redman had now refreshment set before him. Mr. Baines' kind attention to him had made him much happier than he was when Clement was showing off his knowledge of chemistry and the stars; and when he quitted the house, it was with a very friendly feeling towards Clement and Basil, as well as to Mr. Baines.

No sooner had Ralph Redman set off on his return home, than Mr. Baines pointed out to Clement the folly of thinking too highly of ourselves, and too lowly of those who might not know the exact things in which we have been instructed. "As those who call themselves Christians," said he, "we are bound to be humble; for what have we that God in

His goodness has not bestowed? He has given us not only every faculty we possess, but His holy book, and His Son Christ Jesus also, that through Him we might have eternal life. Our state as sinners who must be saved by grace, should teach us how little it becomes us to give way to silly vanity and pride. Do, my dear boy, reflect on this matter, and seek the aid of the Holy Spirit from above, that you may, with all humility of mind, add to your knowledge, without thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Ralph Redman, whom you call the Farmer's Boy, has set before you a useful lesson: learn it, reflect upon it, and reduce it to practice; and never again try to raise yourself by lowering those around you. The text in God's holy word deserves our best attention, which says, 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.'"

[1] James iv. 10.

II.

The Little Dutchman's Cap.

"Toss up the little Dutchman's cap—up with it!" cried one of a group of boys just let loose from school.

"Hurrah! there it goes," cried a second lad, who at the same time threw a small cloth cap in the air.

"Catch it, and up with it again!" shouted a third, as he ran to secure it in its fall.

A little boy, in a black pinafore, ran after the cap, and tried to get it from the crowd. "Oh! do give it to me," cried he; "see the bit of crape is torn off: what will my mother say?"

"Up with the little Dutchman's cap!" was again the cry; and once more it was flung on high, and then, caught by the wind, it was blown into a pool of dirty water.

The boys were now tired of their sport,

and ran away shouting, "Good-bye to the little Dutchman's cap!" The poor owner, bursting into tears, took it up, and tried to clean it of the mud, and put it into shape again. The soiled state of the bit of crape caused him the most grief. Did not the unkind boys know that it was the sign of the great loss which had befallen the young orphan boy? Yes, they *did* know that he was the son of one who had been a stranger in the land, and who had left him to the pity and kindness of strangers.

The little orphan hastened home to his mother, whom he found still at work. That home was a small back room in one of the side streets of the city, where the poorer sort of people dwelt. The afternoon was cold, and the room looked cheerless, for there was but little fire in the grate.

After looking very thoughtfully on the damaged appearance of his black cloth cap, he told his mother of the rude conduct of the boys, and ended by saying, "I cannot wear this cap any more, mother."

"Why not?" she said.

"Because, mother, the other boys at school have such good caps. They laugh at my old

shabby one; and now they will despise it more than they have ever done before."

"I cannot afford to get you a new cap just now," said his mother; "you know how poorly off we are. Work is scarce, and when I can get some it is not very well paid for. It is as much as I can do to get food, and pay the rent of our humble home."

"But the boys will mock me when I come out from school, and again knock my cap into the dirt. It makes me feel so angry, that I do not know what to do."

"I will try to buy you another," replied his mother; but then she thought in her heart that to obtain it she must still further deprive herself of rest and food.

"Your schoolfellows," she added, "must be very thoughtless and unkind; but though their conduct shows pride and want of charity, you must not resent it. You need not be ashamed to own that your mother is a widow and is poor. If we were in our own country, or if your dear father were alive, things would be better with us; but I hope that there will be those who will care for an orphan boy and his mother in a foreign land. But remember, Heinrich, you must be

ashamed of nothing but sin and bad behaviour. Pray to the Lord to give you a heart to love and fear Him—a gentle heart that will bear injury without resentment. Think of Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart; and who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. For the more we are like Jesus, my dear Heinrich, the more humble shall we be if called to endure wrong, and the more ready to forgive all those who call ill names and injure us."

For some nights after this a light was seen burning till a later hour than usual in that widow's room, where she was busy stitching some dozen more shirt-collars than she was accustomed to do. In about a week afterwards the little Dutchman went to school in a new cloth cap.

Several years passed away, when a gentleman came through the town where the schoolhouse stood, near to which the rude sport about the cap had taken place. He entered the schoolroom, and after talking for some time with the master, asked to be allowed to speak to the scholars, who had nearly finished their studies for the day, which request was at once agreed to.

As he stood near to the master's desk the gentleman looked around him for a few minutes in silence, and tears were seen upon his face. He seemed deeply moved as he in a low voice thus begun:—"I was once a boy in this school. I was the only son of my mother, and she was a widow and a foreigner in the land. Nearly all the lads who sat where you now sit have grown up to be men, and are now scattered in the world, though some of them, no doubt, have sunk into an early grave. After more than twenty years' absence I have come to visit the town where I was brought up, and to see my old school-house again. I have to tell you, my dear boys, that I have been a sad rover in many lands; but by the good hand of God have been upheld till now. The instructions of my worthy master, followed by the prayers and counsels of a pious mother, have proved a great blessing to me wherever my lot has been cast. But more than all, I have found that a life of early piety is the best and happiest life a youth can live. My boys, give your hearts to Jesus in the days of your youth, and then when the cares of life and the weakness of old age come upon you, all

shall be well. Trust in the merits of the Son of God for eternal life; rely on His precious blood to take away your sins; and seek, by His grace, to live a holy and useful life in the world, and be trained for a happier state beyond it."

Many other kind and pious words were spoken by the gentleman. He told the boys how God had prospered him, and that he had been for several years settled as a merchant in Holland, in the land of his fathers. Among other things he told them that knowledge, industry, and honesty were of more worth than fine clothes and bags of money. Nor did he forget to urge on them the importance of cherishing kindly feelings towards all men. "Never mock the poor," said he. "Let mercy find a place in your heart; and do not thoughtlessly cause a pang to any creature. Be very gentle to the widow and the fatherless. Show kindness to the stranger in the land. God has said, 'Thou shalt do no wrong or violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow.'[1] 'Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful.'[2]

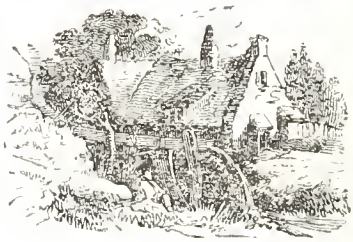
"And now may the Lord bless you and

[1] Jer. xxii. 3. [2] Luke vi. 36.

keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you."[1]

This is a true story we have told you. The reader has no doubt already guessed that the gentleman was no other than he who was once known as *the little Dutchman.* As he passed out of the schoolhouse door the gentleman thought of that afternoon when the boys mockingly tossed his old cloth cap in the air; and a prayer came from his lips that if they were still in the world, the blessing of God might rest upon them, and that at last they all might meet in heaven.

[1] Numbers vi. 24, 25.



III.

Ragged Tom and his Three Foes.

TOM was a poor ragged boy. His home was an old house in a narrow court. A stool, a deal table, and an old bed in one corner, and a bag of shavings in another, were all the goods found in the room where Tom, with his father and mother, lived.

The hands and face of Tom were dirty; his hair was matted; his clothes were in rags; and his feet were without shoes. He often had no food to eat, and no fire to warm him in the cold and damp days of winter. And many were the blows and kicks he got from the rude men and boys who stood or lay about the court.

But there was a happy change in Tom's life. It came about through a ragged-school being set up where he lived. Among the

first boys who went there was poor Tom. It was a good thing for him that he did so.

As he sat in the school on the day it was opened, his teacher said to him, "Tom, you must try if you cannot come to your class with clean hands and face." "Yes, sir," said he; "I will have a good wash at the pump in the next street before I go home." And to the pump he went. It is very hard for a dirty boy who has no soap or towel to make himself clean; but Tom did the best he could. When he went in-doors, his mother looked at him, and seeing his face so clean, she fancied that her face was dirty, and soon got some water and washed it. The father came home, and, finding his wife and boy clean, shortly did as they had done. All hands and faces being now well washed, the mother began to think the room looked dirty, and in a little while she went on her knees and scrubbed it. Then as to their clothes;—it is true they were in a worn and torn state; but even they might be the better for a wash. So Tom's mother begged a bit of soap of her landlord, and her gown and Tom's old shirt looked very much the better for her labour. In a short time, the room and those who

lived in it were changed, and made tidy and comfortable. There was a general clearing up, and thus one of poor Tom's foes —*dirt*— was got rid of.

When Tom first went to school he did not know a letter. He found it hard at first to learn A B C, and still harder to spell words; and it was a long time before he could make out the sense of a whole line of a printed book. But his teacher was kind and patient, and the poor boy tried his best. At last, after some months had passed away, he could read a whole page pretty well. And so it went on until he became the best scholar in the ragged-school. In this way Tom's second great foe—*ignorance*—was overcome.

Tom now found that he had one good friend in the world—his teacher. He felt there was somebody who cared for him, and who wished to see him grow up as an honest, useful, and pious lad. He was now taught that it is sinful to tell lies, to speak bad words, and to quarrel and fight. Until he went to the school, he had never seen a Bible: from that blessed book he was taught that God was "angry with the wicked every day;" but that in His great love He had sent His Son, Jesus

Christ, into the world to save sinners, and that to those who ask Him He gives His Holy Spirit to cleanse the heart from sin. Though he was only a poor boy, he saw that God loved him; and that if he looked in faith to the Saviour who had died on the cross, he would be saved, and go to heaven at last.

It was a bright day in Tom's life when his teacher gave him a New Testament as a reward for good conduct. He could then read about these great truths at home to his father and mother, and when alone. What he read, we hope, was blessed to his soul. He was led to trust in Christ, and to live an honest, sober, and godly life in the world. In this way, Tom was helped in the fight against the greatest foe of all—*sin.*

We must now leave Tom. We have seen how that dirt, the enemy to the body; ignorance, the foe to the mind; and sin, the enemy to the soul, were overcome; and we hope he will go on in the conflict until he gets a complete victory. But while we wish well to him, we will ask God that we may overcome them too. While we pity all the poor ragged children, and pray for them, we will seek for

ourselves to grow in grace, in the love of the truth, and in every good way, that we may live to the glory of God all our days.

"Not more than others I deserve,
  Yet God has given me more;
For I have food, while others starve,
  And beg from door to door.

Are these Thy favours day by day,
  To me above the rest?
Then let me love Thee more than they,
  And try to serve Thee best."

IV.

Only this Once.

THE pond and the mill-stream were frozen over; the little brook and the broad river were coated with ice. The spring in the valley was fast bound, and the water-fall on the hill was stopped in its flow. Long icicles hung from cottage roofs and from branches of trees. There was ice in the country village, and ice in the town: there was ice everywhere.

It was a fine time for the skaters. Men and boys had been seen all the week long busy at their sport. But Sunday came round, and the bells in the church-tower called the people to prepare for the worship of God.

Robert Miles, the blacksmith's apprentice, was getting ready for the Sunday-school. He had been in the Bible-class for two years, and his teacher had a hope that his heart had

been brought to feel the power of the truth. Tears were often seen in his eyes, when he was closely and kindly spoken to; and it was thought that he was really in earnest about the salvation of his soul.

In the course of the day before, Robert Miles had been asked by some young men in the village to join in a skating party on the Sunday. He at once told them that he would not go with them, for that he wished to be with his class. On hearing this, they mocked him, and cried out that they supposed he was going to be a saint all at once, and better than his neighbours.

On the Sunday morning, Robert felt that he ought to take one course, while an evil heart strove to draw him into another. There was a struggle in his mind. At one moment he thought of his teacher's good advice, and the happy hours he had spent in the class; and then there came before his mind pictures of a troop of merry skaters, gliding swiftly to and fro on the frozen river, making the ice ring again.

"To which place shall I go?" said Robert to himself—"to school or to the river?" A secret voice within seemed to say, "Seek now

the salvation of your soul; for now is the accepted time. God would have you go to Jesus and to heaven." And then a wicked heart replied, "There is time enough yet for religion: go to the river; it is *only this once.*"

Robert stood alone at the back gate of his master's shop. The sky was clear, and all around the snow shone like heaps of diamonds in the rays of the morning sun. Within the kitchen doors there were to be seen his skates hung against the wall, and on the table lay ready to his hand a Bible and hymn-book. As he stood at the gate he could see the school, and some children on their way to it. "Go, Robert, without delay, to the Sunday school." Was it a voice he heard? No, doubtless it was the Holy Spirit speaking to his conscience.

Just then the noisy cry of the skaters was heard as they came up the village street. It sounded nearer and nearer; the young men were coming for Robert. "We see you are waiting for us," said they; "come along, for we have no time to lose; we mean to make a long morning of it."

In a moment he turned round, grasped his skates from the kitchen wall, and joined the

Sabbath-breakers. He tried to quiet his mind by saying, "It is only for once; the ice will be gone in another week, and then, next Sunday, I shall go as usual to my class."

When on the ice, all thoughts of the school were driven from his mind; and his laugh was the loudest of all the band. Hour after hour passed away, and still he dashed onward and onward at a great rate.

"A race! a race!" shouted the men and boys; and the whole party strove to follow Robert as he darted along at the top of his speed.

On they went, Robert Miles still the foremost, till they came to a bend of the river, where the ice was thin and yielding. He was now far in advance, when the warning cries of the rest were heard. The bold boy mistook the meaning of their shouts, and tried still to increase the distance between himself and them.

And now suddenly the ice cracked under his feet; it bent, and parted. As he raised a wild shriek of alarm, he was plunged into the cold waters below. One fearful thought of his sins and of death, and he sank in the stream. But rising to the surface, he gasped for

breath, and tried to save himself by clinging to the rough and brittle edges of the ice around him.

For one moment he held fast, and saw in the distance his companions running about wildly, and calling aloud for help. But none came nigh enough to aid poor Robert. Must he sink in the river beneath the ice? Oh! the thought was dreadful. As the ice broke from his weight, he caught again and again with the eager grasp of a drowning man on other pieces, only to find them give way, leaving him to struggle with the waters.

A loud cry was now heard: "Save him! save him!" The next moment a rope was thrown into the river, one end being held tightly by a brave young man on the bank. "Catch hold of it, Robert! take fast hold with both hands, and I will draw you to the shore." Robert had just power left to grasp the rope, and then slowly and safely he was drawn towards the land.

It was the arm of his kind teacher that had saved him from death. The school hours and service were over, and Robert being absent, the teacher on inquiry learned that his scholar had been seen, along with

some young men, on his way to the river. He at once set out to seek the wanderer, and arrived just at the moment of his utmost danger. A rope happily had been left by some workpeople in a field; with this and a strong arm the drowning boy had been saved from death.

Robert had to spend two or three weeks in bed, for the shock and fright and cold brought on a long fit of illness. Again and again his teacher went and sat by him, while the unhappy youth freely owned the temptation, and that it was while he stood halting the foolish and wicked excuse, "It is only for once," overcame him.

His teacher faithfully pointed out to him the greatness of his sin, and then spoke of the mercy of God which had been seen in the hour of danger, saving his body from a watery grave, and, as he hoped it would be found, his soul from eternal death. He also spoke very seriously about the judgment-day, and the sad end of those sinners who have not fled to Jesus Christ for refuge. He told him that it was only through Jesus, and for His sake, that sinners could be forgiven, "It is only those," said he, "who are cleansed from

their sins through faith in the blood of the Son of God, and made holy by His grace, that are prepared to die." Then he showed how we ought to seek for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that our hearts being changed, we might truly repent of our sins, and live to the glory of God all our days.

"Oh think, Robert," continued he, "what would have become of your soul if you had been cut off in your sins! There have been many who, like you, have said, 'Only this once,' that have been left to their own ways. They have put off the care of their souls, and have put it off for ever. 'It is only for once,' as they said, that they would break the sabbath —'only for once,' they would keep away from the Sunday-school, or the house of God; but they have not had another sabbath to spend on earth. Of how many souls has this vain excuse proved the ruin! They have gone on after the desires of their own hearts, and have died in their sins."

When Robert got well he went again to his school; and we are glad to be able to tell that he was spared for many years, to live a pious and useful life.

Young reader, should you be tempted to

commit any sin, or to neglect the salvation of your soul, under the plea that it is "only for this once," think of the story of Robert Miles, the blacksmith's boy.

V

John in Search of a Place.

"WELL, John, have you succeeded to-day, my son?"

"No, mother; I have been nearly all over the town, and no one would take me. But I think if you had been with me I should have stood a better chance. You look so thin and pale, mother, somebody would have felt sorry, and so have taken me; but nobody knew me, and no one saw you."

It was a cold bleak night, and John had been out all day "looking for a place." He had tried hard until it was quite dark, and then gave up, thinking his mother must be tired of waiting for him.

John's mother was a widow, and a very poor one. She had kept herself by needle-work till a severe trial of sickness had confined her to her bed, and she was unable to

do more. She told her little son to sit down by the fire while she got him some food. The fire and the supper were very scanty; but John knew they were the best she could provide, and he felt that he would rather share such a fire and such a supper with so kind a mother, than sit at the best-filled table with anybody else who did not love him as she did, and whom he did not love as he did her.

After a few moments of silence the boy looked up into his mother's face and said, "Mother, do you think it would be wrong to ask my new Sunday-school teacher about a place?" "No, my child, not if you have no other time, and I think that he would be a very proper person; at least, I should think that he would be interested in getting you a good place." "Well, to-morrow is Sunday, and when the class breaks up I will ask him."

After reading a portion of God's holy word, the mother and her little boy kneeled down together to pray. She asked God to bless them with His Holy Spirit, that they might truly repent of sin, and through faith in Jesus Christ obtain pardon. She prayed that God

would care for them as a Father, give them His rich grace, and do that which He knew to be best for them, for Christ's sake.

"I feel happier now," said John; "I was so tired when I came in that I felt quite sad; —did I look so, mother?" The mother's heart was full, and she gave her boy a kiss, which was sweeter to him than many words.

Next morning was the Lord's day. John's breakfast was more scanty than ever; but he said not a word about that, for he saw that his mother ate very little of it. But one or two sticks of wood were left outside the door where it was kept, and he knew that both food and fire might all be gone before night. They had earned no money to buy anything for several days. The sun was shining bright and clear, but the air was very cold. The child had no overcoat; but hastening to the school, he was in his seat just as the superintendent and his teacher entered.

"Who is that little pale-faced boy in your class?" asked the superintendent of the teacher. "His name is Jones—I intend to visit him this very week. He is a well-

behaved boy." "I should like to know more about him," said the superintendent, "and I will speak to him after school."

The superintendent did not forget him, and when the class broke up, seeing him linger behind the other scholars, went up and spoke to him kindly. "You have been here to school several Sundays, have you not, my boy?"

"Yes, sir; I came just a month ago to-day."

"Had you ever been to school before that time?"

"Yes, sir; before mother was taken sick I used to go to another school, but that was a great way off; and when mother got well, and you opened this new school, she brought me here."

"Well, did I not see you yesterday, looking for a place in Water-street?" "I was down there, sir, looking for a place." "Why did you not take that place which the gentleman had for you in the large shop?" "Because, sir, they kept open shop on a Sunday, and mother would not wish me to work on the Lord's day."

"You did not keep the piece of gold money

that you found on the floor as you were coming into the street; why did you not?" "Because it was not mine, sir; and I thought that the gentleman of the shop would find the owner sooner than I should."

"He did, my boy—it was my money. Did you not get a place yesterday?" "No, sir; all the places were full, and nobody knew me." "Well, my boy, you may go now and tell your mother that you have a place. Come to me early in the morning—your teacher will tell you where I live."

John went home with his heart and his eyes so full that he could hardly see the street, or anything else, as he went along. He knew that it would cheer his dear mother very much, and so it did. That Sunday evening John and his mother kneeled down together, and with tears of joy they gave thanks to God, who had not forgotten the fatherless and the widow in their distress.

VI.

Time Flies.

REUBEN ROGERS, when a schoolboy, wrote on new year's day these words in his new copy-book: "TIME FLIES." But when he wrote them, in a good round hand, he was thinking of a game of trap-and-ball, and paid but little attention to anything else. What did he think or care for the flight of time? He was only ten years old, and he had known men and women who had lived to the age of eighty; surely, he said to himself, I have plenty of time before me. He only wished to finish his copy, and get out to play with his cousins, who had come from town on a visit.

When Reuben was a few years older, he saw a sun-dial on the garden-wall, under which was cut in large letters, "TIME FLIES." He stood to look at these two little words, and

they brought to his mind the copy he had written in his new copy-book on new year's day. But just at that moment a purple butterfly flew into the garden, and after flitting from one flower to another, settled on a myrtle-tree. No sooner did Reuben see the butterfly than he ran to catch it in his cap. It darted over the garden beds, rose above the blackthorn hedge, and then flew across the clover field, closely followed by the eager boy, who soon forgot the words under the sun-dial. The butterfly got safely into a wood, and Reuben Rogers went home with his coat and trousers torn and very tired for his pains.

Reuben grew up to be a stout youth, and went to work at Dobbin's farm. "Carry this parcel down to the cross-road," said his master one day, "and when the London stage coach passes, be sure to give it to the guard, and tell him to leave it at the booking-office, where it will be called for. Now, make haste, for TIME FLIES." These words set Reuben off at a quick rate; but as he ran along he met Ned Ward, the doctor's boy, and they stopped to have a gossip. It was about a cricket match that had been played the day before,

and Reuben and the doctor's boy settled between themselves who was the best batsman, and who the best bowler. Through this delay, Reuben got to the cross road more than a quarter of an hour after the coach had passed. The delivery of this parcel was of great importance, as it was for the farmer's nephew, who was to sail the next morning for India. The farmer was very angry when he found that the ship had left the port before the parcel arrived there; and Reuben Rogers lost his place.

When Reuben was a young man he heard a minister in the pulpit say to the people, "TIME FLIES; make no delay: repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved." The preacher raised his hands on high, and as the tears started into his eyes, he again cried aloud — "TIME FLIES. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Now is the accepted time;" — and then he cried again, "Forget not, my hearers. TIME FLIES." For a moment this appeal called to Reuben's mind his copy-slip, the sun dial, and the farmer's words; but it was only for a moment, for

as he went home he stopped at the village beershop, where Barnes the blacksmith and Peters the peddler were idling away the precious hours of the sabbath. Reuben Rogers was invited to take a drink, which he did; and, seated with these bad companions, he very soon forgot the solemn words of the preacher.

Reuben lived a careless life for many years, thinking much about this world, and little about the world to come. He was some forty years old when, one day, he went into a graveyard. He saw on a tomb the well-known words which had often met his eye and ear, "TIME FLIES." He stopped to look at the tomb; and as he saw the words, his memory recalled the day when he sat as a little boy writing his copy-slip—the time when he stood looking at the sun-dial in the garden—and that sabbath when the preacher spoke so solemnly to the people. As he looked on the gravestone he rubbed away a tear from his cheek with the sleeve of his coat, and then walked onward with a slow step. But when he reached home, Tim the sawyer was waiting for him at the garden gate. He had come to invite Reuben to a club feast that was to be

held in the next village in a month's time. They soon got into close talk on the matter, when Reuben promised to be at the feast, thoughts of which soon put away all serious concern from his mind.

It was when Reuben fell ill that he thought again of the words, "TIME FLIES." The doctor said that the fever, which lay heavily upon him, would be likely to end in his death. There, in a small room, the sick man lay for days and weeks, when a pious man, who heard of his state, went to see him, and found him with a Bible lying on his bed, and his finger pointing to the words, "This I say, brethren, the time is short."[1] "It is true," said the kind visitor to Reuben, "our days are passing away: a little longer, and the place which knows us now, shall know us no more for ever. We spend our years as a tale that is told. Oh, then, let us see if we are ready to go hence. Moments are worth more to you now than bags of gold. Look to Jesus; seek for mercy through faith in His name and merits. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found: call ye upon Him while He is near. He invites guilty sinners to go to Him, and

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 29.

has promised that those who draw nigh to Him in faith shall not be cast out. Do not delay: your days on earth are but few. Time will soon have fled, and you will have gone hence. Now is the accepted hour."

Reuben listened to the good man's words, and they went to his heart. What would he not now have given for the days of youth to return, and the health, which was for ever gone, to be restored to him! Oh, that he had listened to the warnings that had been so often given in life, and from which he had turned, and gone into folly and sin. Poor Reuben was taken away from this world,—but, we hope, not before he had been taught the value of time, and to seek for pardon through faith in the Saviour.

Young reader! do not forget that "TIME FLIES." Nor can you stop it in its flight. Not the rich man's wealth, nor the mighty man's power, can avail to bring back one moment when it is past. Forget not the short story of Reuben Rogers; and learn from his sad case a lesson of wisdom that may do you good. While your eyes are bright, and youth and health are given you, think

how quickly your days on earth are spent, and seek through faith in Jesus Christ for the grace of God, that you may be ready to live or die.

VII.

The Plate of Cherries.

OF all the cherry-trees in our village there was not one like that which grew in Widow White's little garden. The children, as they came out of school, were sure to stop and look at the red-cheeked fruit in the cherry-season. But it is a sad thing to tell, that there were some of the school-boys who not only threw stones to knock down the cherries, but took a delight in playing some other foolish tricks, which often ended to their own hurt and shame.

By the side of the cherry-tree at Widow White's was a large water-butt, placed near the gate which opened into a green, shady lane; and to this spot some of the bad boys would often slily creep, and then turn the tap, that the water might run to waste, while they got quickly away. This conduct was the

more shameful, as water was scarce in the village, and people had to bring it from a distant brook.

Many a time did the poor widow try to overtake the wicked boys, but they were too swift of foot for her to secure. One day, however, just after the school had broken up, three of the boys made their way to the garden-gate. They looked up and down the lane, and over the common. They saw no one at hand, so they slily opened the gate, and set the water running all over the path. They were about to hasten away, when who should turn the corner but Widow White; and little Job Turner, in his flurry, ran directly against her, and was caught in her arms.

Job tried hard to get away, but holding him fast by the collar of his jacket, she managed to take him through her kitchen, into her little front parlour. "There now, sit down," said Mrs. White, almost out of breath: "sit there, I desire you, till I return." She then went out of the room, taking care to lock the door after her. Job sat down, and was now left to his own thoughts, which were not of a very pleasant kind.

"How foolish I have been to get into such trouble!" said Job. "What will my mother say to me, and what will the schoolmaster do, when he knows what I have done? And how the boys will laugh at me for being caught and punished!"

While Job was thus speaking to himself, he heard the steps of Widow White at the door. As the lock was unturned, his eyes at once fell on the hands of the old lady, for he made sure she had gone into the garden for a stick to beat him. But what was his surprise when he saw in her hand a plate of ripe cherries!

"Do you like cherries, my little boy?" she said, in her usual kind manner. Job looked at her, and did not know what to answer. "Does she mean," thought he, "to give me the cherries first, and the flogging afterwards?" "Come, do not be afraid: see if you think they are ripe," she continued. Job now took one. "There, don't be afraid, take a few more." Widow White then placed the whole plateful on the table, and invited him to take as many as he thought would do him good.

The boy could not make out what it all

meant. But as he saw she did not look angry, he took courage, and ate nearly all the fruit. "Well, Job," said she, "are they not fine cherries?" In a short time he began to think that Widow White was, indeed, a good old woman; and the more so, when she sat down by his side, and talked to him kindly of the folly and sin of playing hurtful tricks, and of joining bad boys in their evil ways. She told him to ask God for His Holy Spirit, to give him a new heart, that he might be made sorry for his sins, and find mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, the only and ever-blessed Saviour.

After she had thus spoken to him, she said, "There, Job, you may now go home, or your mother will think some harm has come to you; but before you go I wish you to tell me if you will turn the tap any more, and waste the water from the butt?" "Oh no," cried Job, as the tears came into his eyes, and his heart beat quickly, "that I never will; and if I see any other boys about to do it, I will try all I can to stop them."

The Widow White's forgiving conduct had touched the heart of little Job Turner; and it is reported in the village that from that time

the boys never again threw stones at the cherry-tree, nor acted rudely in any way to the kind old woman. As for Job, when he used to meet her, he always made a low bow, looked up in her face with a smile, as the thought would come into his mind of the way in which she led him to repent of his bad conduct by the gift of a plate of ripe red cherries.

"BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL,
BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

Rom. xii. 21.

VIII.

More Wonderful than the Telegraph.

You have heard people talk about the telegraph; and you have seen the wires, as they run across the country, stretched on high poles by the side of the railroad.

What can be more wonderful than this—a piece of news can be sent from the city of London, in one and the same instant, to the most distant part of our country, and even to foreign parts — thousands of miles away! People have said, "When will wonders cease? Surely, this is the wonder of all wonders."

George and Arthur Bates had often wished to visit the telegraph office. They had heard of the strange doings of the wonderful machine there.

One day Arthur asked George how it could

be that on those wires unseen messages were passing to and fro?

"I do not know how it is," replied George; "father says it is by means of electricity; and lightning is electricity; and that is the reason news travels so quickly by the telegraph."

One day, after school, these children went into their father's office, and asked him if he would be so kind as to take them to the railway station to see the way in which messages were sent along the wires.

Their father was always glad to gratify his children; so he took them each by the hand, and in a short time they were by the side of the clerk, looking at the little instrument that noted down intelligence like a living thing.

They asked their father to send a message to their uncle in York. This he agreed to do; but the little machine was so busy that the clerk could not just then attend to them.

Tic, tic, tic; dot, dot; click, click, click, went the little pointer. By-and-by it stopped for an instant, but it soon began again.

"That is B for Bradford," said the clerk; "we must wait till this message is finished." As soon as that sentence was written, there was a W for Wakefield, and then a L for Leeds; and George and Arthur were almost out of patience, as young people are apt to be when their wishes are not at once gratified.

After a while their turn came. The clerk sent, as it were, a lightning notice to York, and "Ay, ay," was the reply; and then the message was sent.

The children took the book which the clerk handed them, and looked over the telegraphic alphabet; and George said he was sure it must be a great deal more hard to remember than the alphabet of A B C. Indeed he was quite puzzled.

They thought they should like to spend a day in watching the motions of the telegraph; but after they had been there for some time, their father told them they must return home.

In the evening the young folks could talk of nothing but the wonders of the telegraph. "Is it not the most wonderful thing you ever heard of, father?" said Arthur.

"No," replied his father; "I have heard of things more wonderful."

"But, father," said George, "you never heard of any message being sent so quickly as by this means, have you?"

"Yes, I have, my son."

"And receiving an answer as quickly?" added George.

"Yes, and even sooner," replied his father.

"Are you in earnest, father?" said Arthur, looking in his face. "Is it possible you know of a more wonderful way of sending messages than by telegraph?"

"I never was more in earnest than I am when I say 'Yes' to your question."

"Well, father," said George, "do tell me what it is, and in what respect it is better than the telegraph."

"In the first place," said his father, "you do not have to wait to send your message while others are attended to; for your message can go with thousands of others, without any interruption or hindrance."

"Yes, that is an improvement," said George; "for we had to wait for some time, you know."

"And in the next place," continued his

father, "there is no need of wires, or electricity, or any machinery. And what is more wonderful than all is the fact that you need not always even express in words the nature of your message; though it is quite necessary that you truly and sincerely desire a favourable reply to your request.

"Besides all this, the mode of which I speak is better than all others, from the fact that you need not go to any particular place to send your request. In the lonely desert, on the wide sea, in the crowded city, on the mountain-top, by night or by day, in sickness and health, in trouble and affliction, the way is open to all. And the applicants can never be so numerous but the simplest desire of the feeblest child, properly presented, shall not meet with attention."

"Is there any account published of this wonderful manner?" asked George.

"Yes, there is, my son; and I hope your interest in the subject will not be diminished when I tell you it is to be found in the Bible."

"In the Bible, father!" cried both the young people.

"Certainly; and if you will both get your

Bibles, I will tell you where to find the passages confirming what I have said."

They then opened their Bibles, and found, as their father directed them, the twenty-fourth verse of the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, which Arthur read, as follows: 'And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

Next, George found and read the ninth verse of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah: 'Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.'"

"Now turn," said their father, "to Daniel, ninth chapter, twentieth to the twenty-third verses.

"'And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God; . . . yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, . . . being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee,'" etc.

"I see, father, from these passages," said Arthur, "that you mean prayer."

"Yes," said Mr. Bates; "and I am sure you will both agree with me that this mode of communication with heaven is very wonderful; for, by this means, if we call upon God, we shall receive an answer.

"God waits to hear our prayers. We have access to Him at all times by faith in Christ Jesus, who is our Advocate with the Father. When we plead the merits of Jesus, and rely on Him alone, we know that God hears us. Whatsoever we truly ask in His name shall be done for us. But when we pray we must feel our need of help. How can we expect that God will regard our prayers if we do not feel that we are sinners, and humble ourselves and repent before Him?

'Tis useless to implore,
  Unless we feel our need;
Unless 'tis from a sense of want
  That all our prayers proceed.
We may as well kneel down,
  And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
  A prayer of words alone.'

"May we, my dear children, ever draw nigh to God, relying on Jesus, and under the teachings of His Holy Spirit."

IX.

Your Best Friend.

FAR away in the back parts of America an Indian lived on a small farm. He was one of the tribe of Red Indians, who are so called because their skin is of a reddish colour. These "red men" mostly live by hunting and fishing, and their homes are in the great forests or along the shores of large lakes. But this Indian settled on a farm, which had been given to him for some service he had done for the white people of those parts.

The Indian built a house, and made a garden, which he planted with flowers. He ploughed the fields, and sowed them with corn. Not far off was the village of the white people. These people did not treat him badly; but because he was an Indian, and they had not yet learned the true spirit of brotherly

love, they did not feel and act as if they were his friends.

After some time his only child fell ill, and he nursed it day and night, for his wife was dead. Many long hours passed away, as he sat by its side, but not one of the white people went near to help him, or to speak a kind word. When the child died, he was still alone; and when he dug its grave, and carried it to be buried, no one came to mourn, or to comfort him in his sorrow. He went home to his lonely house and wept, but there were none to weep with him.

A few days passed away, and the Indian went to the village of the white people. "When white man's child is ill," he said, "Indian man is sorry. When he die, Indian help to bury him. But when my child die, no one speak to me. I make his grave myself, and I go back to my house and weep alone. I cannot live here. I have no friend to love me."

The poor Indian felt that he wanted a friend. He could not live without one: so he dug up the body of his child, and carried it with him through the forests. There among his own people he buried it, and there, too, he found another home.

Like this Red Indian, we all feel that we want a friend. The world would be a lonely place if there were no one we could love, and no one who loved us. We need some friend to share our joys, and to visit and comfort us when we are in trouble.

Perhaps the young reader says, "I have not only one, but many friends, and I cannot tell you how much I love them. They are always kind to me, and do everything to make me happy." Well, then, these are great blessings, and you should thank God for them.

But there is One who is your BEST FRIEND —One who loves you better than any one else can love you, and who can do you good in ways that no one else can. This Friend is *Jesus Christ,* and of Him we would now speak to you.

Is not any one a true friend who sets you a good example? Jesus is that Friend. He is the best and safest pattern for you to follow. He was of a meek and lowly mind. He went about doing good, and was kind and loving to all; patient under suffering, and ready to forgive all insult and injury. He loved prayer, and kept the law of God in all things. He was holy, and without any sin. In every way

He was an example of all that is lovely, and pure, and true.

Is not any one a real friend who seeks to make you happy? Jesus does this: He would have you to be happy in this world, and in the world to come. The blessed God made you to be holy and happy; but like silly sheep, you, and all the children of men, have strayed from Him: by your sins you have gone in the way of danger and death. In this sad state the Son of God saw you ready to perish, and He came to seek and save you. He came to show you the danger you are in, and to tell you of the great mercy of your Father in heaven. He knew that you could never be happy while you were away from God; and to bring you back, He was born into the world in your nature. He humbled Himself for your sake. For you He denied Himself, and became poor and the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Is He not, then, your best Friend?

Nor was this all. For you He suffered such agony that He "sweat as it were great drops of blood." He was beaten with rods, crowned with thorns, spit upon, mocked and reviled, for you. On the cross He bore the

guilt of your sins; for He knew that this was the only way in which it could be taken away. Greater love He could not show than by laying down His life for you. Yes, He died for *you.*

And now in heaven, He "ever lives" to plead for you, if you go to God by faith in Him. What we ask in His name, and for His sake, we shall have, if it be good for us to have it. He cannot die any more, nor change, nor remove from us, as earthly friends do; but He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

He can bestow gifts such as no other friend can—such as are of more worth than all the riches of this world. He gives, as His great gift, His Holy Spirit, to create within us a new, clean heart;—a heart that loves God, that is sorry for and shuns all sin, and is filled with peace and joy.

Is not Jesus, then, a true and loving Friend—a wise and faithful Friend—*your* best Friend?

"Then love your heavenly Friend,
And seek His saving grace;
He'll guide you safely to the end,
And you shall see His face."

If you had lived at the time when Jesus Christ was upon the earth, and you had been asked to have Him for your Friend, would you not have gone to Him? Or would you have said, "No, I cannot go *now?*" Surely you would have gone to Him without delay. Why, then, do you not seek Him? We go to our true friends without fear. We hasten to them when they invite us. We can trust them, for we are quite sure that they mean what they say.

Come to-day, and take Jesus for *your* Friend. He loves to see children come to Him. Did He not say, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me?" He will care for you, and be glad to see you draw near, as much as He welcomed those who were brought to Him by their mothers.

Do you ask how you are to go to Him? We tell you that you must go to Him in faith—with all your heart—feeling quite sure that He is able and willing to save you. Though you cannot see Him, He sees you. Though you cannot really hear His voice, He hears your voice. From His throne of glory He beholds those who love Him, and those

who seek Him. He rules over all worlds, and can do what He pleases. He is as great in power, as He is full of love. And if you look to Him, He will be with you at all times, and in all places—in life and in death; and after death He will welcome you to His blessed home in heaven. He will give you a bright crown of glory that shall never fade away, and will make you as a king for ever and ever.

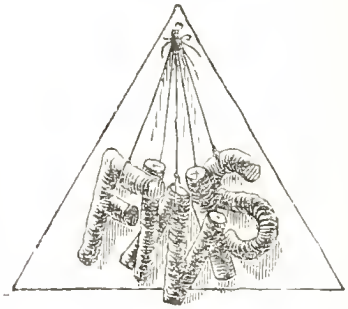
An old man, one day, took a child on his knees, and told him to seek Jesus by prayer, and to love Him as the sinner's Friend. The child looked in His face, and asked, "But do you seek Jesus, and do you love Him?" And the old man in sorrow said, "I would, my child, but my heart is hard. When I was young I thought I would seek the Lord, but I did not; now I am old, my heart is as hard and as cold as a stone."

"I sought the Lord when I was a child," said another old man, "and He has been a kind and loving Friend to me all through my life; and now I am dying He is near to comfort and sustain me. Blessed be His holy name, I shall see Him and love Him for ever!"

Which of these old men would you wish to be like?

> "Choose ye to-day: Christ calls to-day;
> Oh, listen to His voice,
> And make the Lord, without delay,
> Your early, only choice."

"I LOVE THEM THAT LOVE ME; AND THOSE THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME."—*Prov.* viii. 17.



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